SOUVENIR

... of the ...

Silver Jubilee

... of ...

ST. PETER'S COLONY

1903

1928

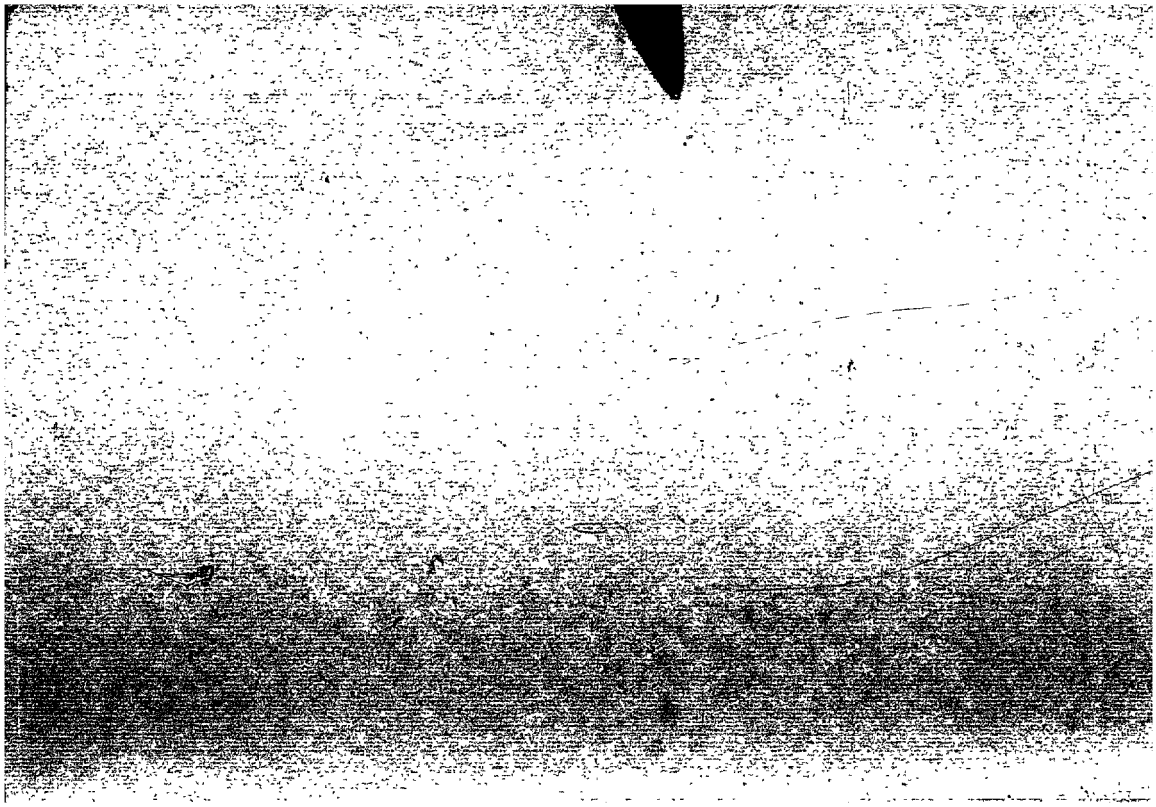
Zum Andenken

an das

Silberne Jubiläum

der

St. Peters-Kolonie



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70.8.12/17

The Old Settlers

NOW ONE
~~Full two~~ score years and five have passed,
Since stalwart men from distant climes,
Came west to test a fertile soil,
To plan a home on rolling plain.

* * * *

The frontier days were none of ease,
Of carefree hours or pleasant dreams,
For test and trial of varied kind,
Met settler at each doubtful turn.

* * * *

The prairie bleak that ne'er had felt
Ought else than thund'ring hoof,
Or stealthy step of slinking beast,
Soon quivered 'neath the busy plow.

* * * *

The spring, soon after wintry blasts
Had spent their biting sting,
Brought wakened life in field and dale,
And roused the sinking hopes again.

* * * *

That year—it passed, and freshened hope
Urged calloused hands to hurry on
In building homes for loved ones,
Who soon arrived to help along.

* * * *

Their efforts joined, now they could work
To found a home to call their own,
To forge ahead, with foresight keen,
That now we see was not in vain.

* * * *

The silvered hair on furrowed brow,
Bespeak the days since settler new
Laid shoulder to a worthy task,
That from above has well been blessed.

1877

J. H

Retrospective Glances

In the history of mankind, a century contains any number of events worthy of chronicle for the benefit of posterity. A brief period of twenty-five years in a certain section of a country may not be marked by occurences which deserve to be inserted in the annals of world history, but it may surely be marked by events, movements and ideals that are destined to have an influence on a portion of the world's population. During a span of twenty-five years, a young country may progress to such an extent that the events of the period deserve at least some comment.

A quarter century has passed since a section of Western Canada has been opened to systematic colonization—a section in the Prairie Provinces, aptly called " the heart of Saskatchewan." It is the district known as St. Peter's Colony.

About twenty-six years ago, when thousands in the United States looked towards Canada as a promising land for settlers, many farmers of Minnesota, particularly in Stearns County, as also of other States and countries, decided to cast their lot on the open prairies of Saskatchewan. These prospective settlers, Catholics, and largely of German extraction, conceived the plan of establishing a colony where they might dwell with those of their faith and nationality. But, realizing that such an undertaking would be built on shifting sands, if there were no provision made for their personal spiritual well-being, these staunch Catholics soon concerned themselves about obtaining priests of their own tongue. Their intentions were placed before the Benedictine Fathers of St. John's Abbey at Collegeville, Minnesota, with the view of obtaining priests from the institution. The matter was considered and the decision reached to transfer the small Benedictine Community of Cluny from the unfavourable marshes of Illinois to the plains of Western Canada.

Prior to this, however, the task of exploring and selecting a suitable locality was not neglected. On August 12, 1902, Mr. H. J. Haskamp, Mr. Maurice Hoeschen and Mr. Henry Hoeschen, all former students of St. John's University at Collegeville, Minn., set out for Western Canada with Father Bruno Doerfler, O. S. B., at that time Rector of St. John's. Mr. F. J. Lange, president of the Catholic Land Society of St. Paul, Minn., had intended to accompany the expedition,but was prevented by pressing business. At Winnpeg, the little group was advised to inspect various parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan. Their visit to Alberta and southern Saskatchewan did not impress them very favourably and prompted them to set out on a 400-mile wagon journey which terminated, after a good deal of adventure, at Saskatoon, which at that time was little more than a humble settlement. From here the group proceeded to Rosthern and then pushed forward about 40 miles to the southeast. Here they found a stretch of land that seemed to fulfill all the requirements for a colony. This region is the present St. Peter's Colony.

The favourable reports with which the explorers returned, prompted rapid action in col-

onizing this land. Mr. Hoeschen and Mr. Haskamp organized the German American Land Company which soon purchased 100,000 acres of desirable railroad land, while the Catholic Settlement Society of St. Paul undertook to secure settlers for the new territory. The new colony attracted people in short time. Already in October, 1902, a group of twenty-six men arrived at Rosthern, and, in company with Father Bruno, inspected and chose their homesteads. A few months later about 1000 persons had selected homesteads.

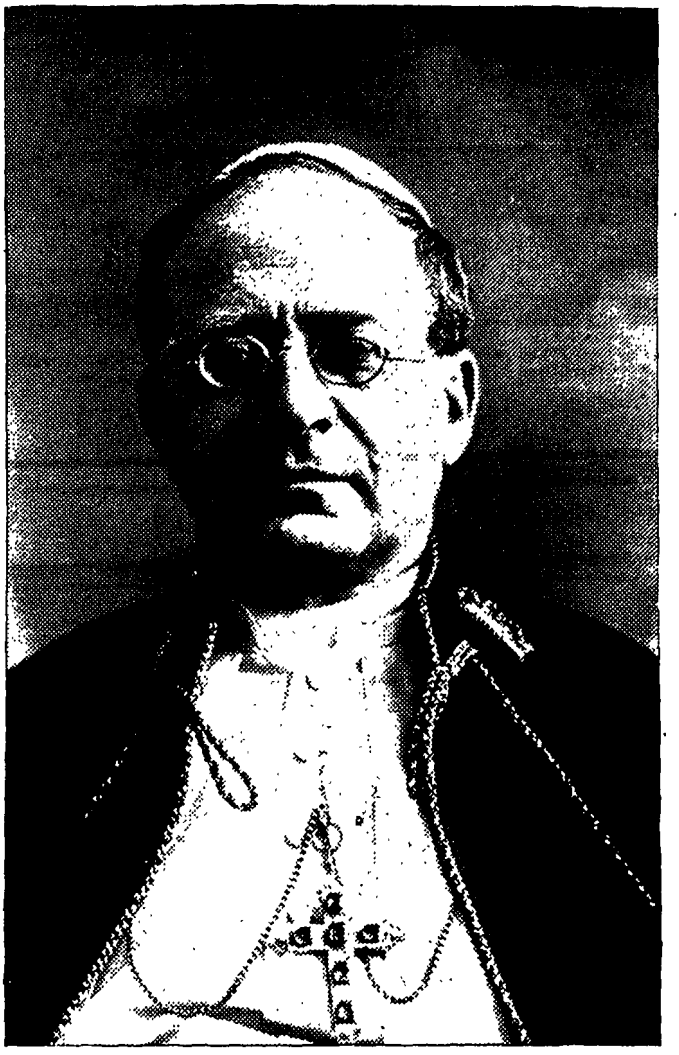
In December of the same year the community of Benedictine Fathers at Cluny, Illinois, under their superior, Prior Alfred Mayer, O. S. B., assembled at St. Paul, Minnesota, and accepted Abbot Peter Engel's suggestion to establish their house in Saskatchewan. In January, 1903, Prior Alfred and Father Bruno again visited the selected region for purposes of further investigation. On that occasion they interviewed the late Bishop Pascal, Vicar Apostolic of Saskatchewan, who, on January 16, entrusted the pastoral charge in the territory comprised by Townships 35 to 40, Ranges 18 to 22, and Townships 37 to 41, Ranges 23 to 26, west of the second meridian, into their hands. In the course of the next few months, Prior Alfred made several more visits to the colony and on May 14, 1903, the first contingent of Benedictine monks, consisting of about half a dozen members, arrived at Rosthern. Their arrival here marked the beginning of that rugged pioneer life which was the lot of all the early settlers, the memory of which is still fresh in the minds of old timers.

To recount all or even a number of the interesting adventures of the early days is impossible within the narrow compass of these pages. The trials and difficulties of the one were the trials and difficulties of the other. There were the hardships arising from isolation, from the rigorous climate, from the tardy seasons, from the pesky mosquitoes. The beginnings indeed were no rosy path of ease. Undaunted courage and constant industriousness were necessary for success; but these essential qualifications adorned the hardy pioneers. The progress and development of the land they undertook to form into a home, the thriving towns and villages, the well organized parishes, the flourishing educational and charitable insituations are a standing testimony to the courage, foresight and work of these men.

The practical work done by these early settlers may be seen in the fact that already in 1903 a church, school and parish house were erected in the first parish organized, at Leofeld. The church here, under the patronage of St. Boniface, was constructed of lumber hauled from Rosthern, whereas the other churches in the colony, as also most homes, were rapidly built of logs, or rather, of poplar trees found nearby.

At Muenster, Annaheim and Dead Moose Lake, now known as Marysburg, parishes were established the same year. At these places and elsewhere, where divine services were conducted in private houses, beautiful churches and commodious schools to-day show forth the spirit of co-operation which animated the people in spite of great personal hardship.

Smaller sections of the colony soon became missions where services were held as often as



His Holiness Pope Pius XI.
Protector of the whole Order of St. Benedict

Seine Heiligkeit Papſt Pius *XI.*, der Protektor des Benediktiner-Ordens.

possible. Gradually these developed, and at present the following places have churches with resident pastors: Muenster, Humboldt, Carmel, Bruno, Cudworth, Leofeld, St. Benedict, Lenora Lake, Marysburg, Fulda, Watson, Engelfeld, Naicam, Annaheim. The following are still attended as missions: St. Gregor, St. Oswald, Beauchamp, Spalding, St. Scholastica, Conception, Dana, Petersen, St. Leo, St. Martin, Manresa. Most of these missions are attended every Sunday and holy day of obligation, and sermons are geenrally delivered in both English and German.

Recognition of the work done in St. Peter's Colony came from Rome in 1911 when the young monastery at Muenster was elevated to the dignity of an abbey, with Prior Bruno Doerfler, the zealous missionary superior who had done so much in establishing the colony, as first Abbot. The benediction of the first Benedictine Abbot in Canada took place in the Muenster Church on October 18, 1911, at the hands of the Rt. Rev. Albert Pascal, O. M. I., first Bishop of Prince Albert.

During Abbot Bruno's incumbency the praiseworthy work inaugurated by Prior Alfred was continued. Numerous progressive moves were advanced, larger and better churches and schools replaced the former humble structures and new missions were begun. In 1911 the Elizabethan Sisters established their convent and hospital at Humboldt, and soon extended their charitable activities to others parts of the province. In 1913 the Ursuline Sisters founded their convent at Bruno, where they conduct the St. Ursula Academy, besides teaching in the schools of different towns.

In 1921, the territory comprised by the colony was placed under the spiritual jurisdiction of the superior of St. Peter's Abbey, the monastery at Muenster being raised to the dignity of an *Abbatia Nullius*. Abbot Michael Ott, who succeeded Abbot Bruno in 1919, thus became the first Abbot-Ordinary in Canada. The same year the new abbey and college building was erected at Muenster. The valuable work done by this first Benedictine boarding school in Canada has since then received recognition in various ways.

On September 8, 1926, a new Abbot was elected to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Abbot Michael. The Rt. Rev. Severin Gertken, O.S.B., present Abbot-Ordinary, was solemnly blessed on May 4th of the following year by Bishop Prud'homme in St. Peter's Church, Archbishop Mathieu, of Regina, Bishop Busch, of St. Cloud, Minnesota, several Abbots, and a large number of the clergy honoring the occasion by their presence.

A further detailed report of later activities must be omitted here, but will be found in current issues of *The Prairie Messenger* and *St. Peters Bote*, the two Catholic papers published at Muenster.

Even a brief retrospective glance must convince us of the fact that the success of St. Peter's Colony is largely due to the energy, foresight and courage of the early settlers.

On the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of the Colony they founded, we turn to them with gratitude, assuring them that the coming generation will carry on the work so nobly begun.

His Holiness Pope Benedict XV.

During the pontificate of Pope Benedict, St. Peter's Abbey was raised to an *Abbatia Nullius*, the Abbot of the Benedictine Abbey at Muenster, receiving episcopal jurisdiction over St. Peter's Colony. By this act the Colony acquired a unique distinction, since there are only fifteen such ecclesiastical provinces in the world. It is the only *Abbatia Nullius* in Canada. This favor was conferred May 6, 1921.

Seine Heiligkeit Papst Benedikt *XV.*, der die St. Peters-Abtei zu einer Abbatia Nullius erhob.

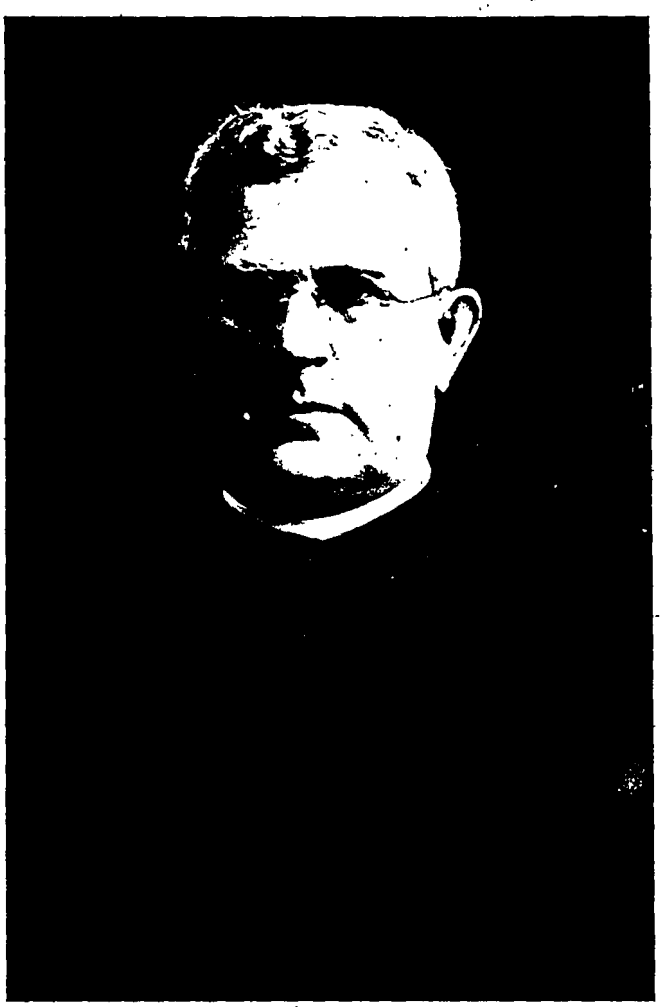
A Tribute From a Veteran Charity Worker

Twenty-five years have elapsed since the Benedictine Fathers approached the late Bishop Pascal in view of establishing a German Catholic Colony within the limits of the diocese. The heart of the dear old Bishop was filled with delight at the thought that in the near future he would be able to welcome to his diocese thousands and thousands of staunch Catholics. The first settlers arrived in spring of 1903. It seems a long time and yet does it not rather look like a dream when we gaze back upon these years that have sped by so swiftly whilst many of us have grown old without knowing it.

The good accomplished during all these years has stamped an indelible character upon our western prairies. Where twenty-five years ago a few Indians roamed unmolested, where but a few white families were squatting here and there, we find today flourishing towns and villages, we meet with all the refinements of modern civilization. Where years ago the birds alone sang the praise of the Creator, we find today beautiful churches and chapels where holy Mass is daily offered and where numerous souls gather around the Tabernacle in loving, grateful adoration. In every direction the country is dotted with Catholic schools where the growing generation is initiated in the secrets of worldly knowledge as well as in the mysteries of our holy Catholic Faith.

The whole district has undergone a wonderful transformation. To-day the St. Peter's Colony stands there as the stronghold of Catholic life. To whom is all this due? To the apostolic zeal of the devoted sons of St. Benedict and to the spirit of self-sacrifice which filled the hearts of the first pioneers. Those of us who have seen these valiant soldiers of Christ at work, facing with a smile on their lips the most painful sacrifices, privations, poverty, disappointments, sufferings of soul and body, know where to look for the secret of the great success of their undertaking, namely in the spirit of Faith of the Founders of the Colony, in their unfaltering confidence in God, in their spirit of prayer and work. All these privations were shared by the first settlers that arrived in this part of Western Canada. Theirs was no life of ease and comfort, but rather a life of constant self-sacrifice. The blessing of Heaven has visibly been upon the project of establishing a thoroughly Catholic Colony in this part of the Province. No wonder that the undertaking has been a success which exceeds by far the most sanguine expectations.

To-day the founders and pioneers of the Colony may look back on the work they have accomplished. They may view their work with a legitimate pride, and from every corner of our beautiful Province Catholic hearts unite with the valiant sons of St. Benedict in a grand act of thanksgiving, because through them "God has done great things." All hearts



The Very Rev. Prior Alfred Mayer, O.S.B.

Prior Alfred was the superior of the small Benedictine community of Cluny, Illinois, when it was transferred to Saskatchewan.

Der Hochwürde Alfred Mayer, O. S. B.

Prior Alfred war der Obere des kleinen Klosters von Cluny in Illinois, als dieses nach Saskatchewan verlegt wurde.

will join in their beautiful motto: "That in all things God may be glorified."

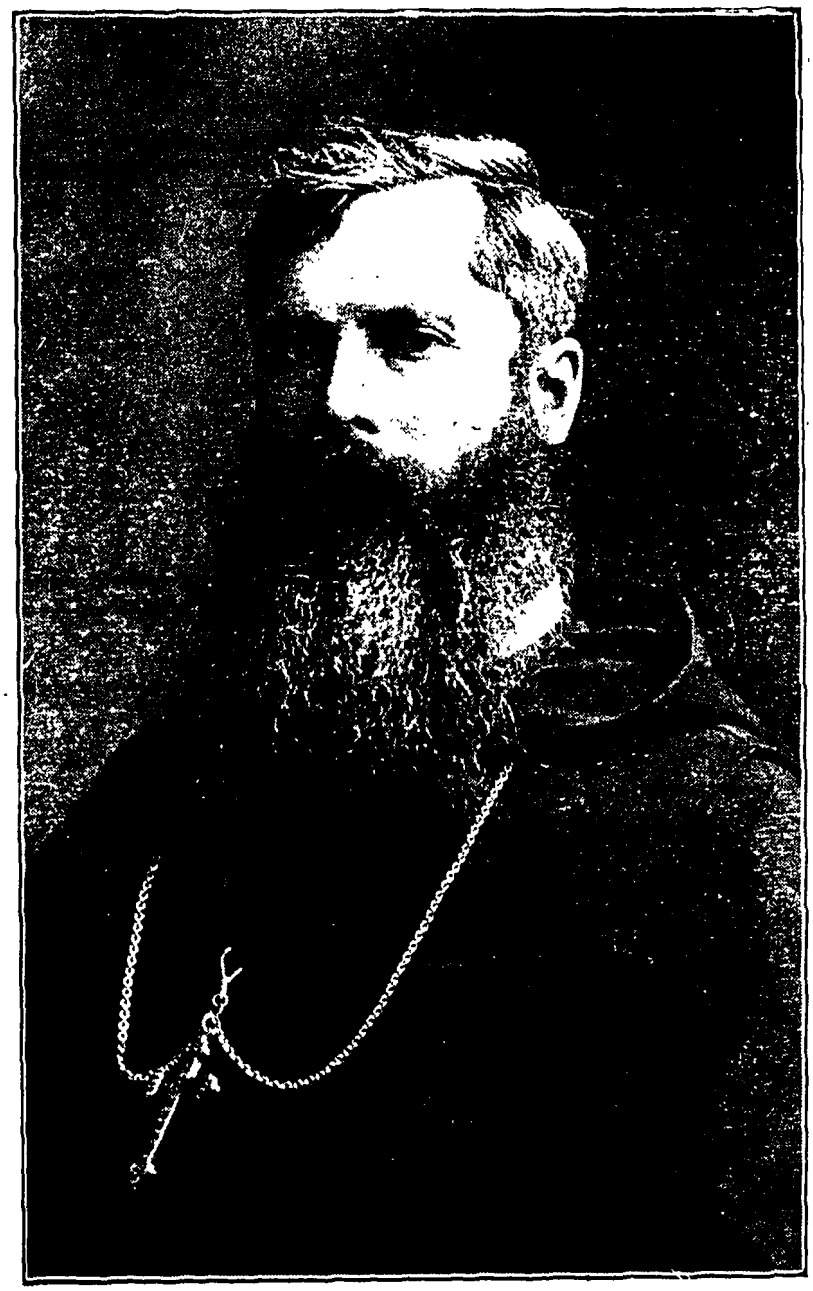
May the Founders of the Colony and the pioneers of the first hour transmit to the present generation their own spirit, then the work so well begun shall see further developments and St. Peter's Colony shall ever play a leading part in the Catholic life of Western Canada and especially in our own Province of Saskatchewan.

May I be allowed to add a few words about the relation of the Catholic Orphanage to the St. Peter's Colony? In 1903 the Orphanage was still in its infancy counting but three years since it was opened by Bishop Pascal. Beginnings were very hard. There was want of everything and more than once it may have looked as if the undertaking had been premature, too hazardous. Under conditions that prevailed in those days an Orphanage could hardly expect to live. However, when the Benedictine Fathers arrived, when the settlers came in ever increasing numbers, every one connected with the Orphanage took courage. The situation was saved. The Orphanage will survive because it is sure to receive the wholehearted support of the new comers—men endowed with a great spirit of Faith, a spirit of charity and sacrifice. We were not disappointed in our calculations. Donations of all kind found their way to the Orphanage, money, a constant supply of food and clothing. No doubt the Orphanage will still have to weather many a storm; its life has not been one of uninterrupted sunshine, but I am glad to say that our appeals for assistance have always met with a ready and generous response from the good people of the St. Peter's Colony. I can say without fear of being contradicted that the St. Peter's Colony occupies the foremost place amongst the supporters and benefactors of the Orphanage. Would it be far from the mark to say that the wonderful development of the Colony is to a certain extent the fruit of that spirit of charity which characterized the founders and pioneers of the Colony? It seems that here we have a visible application of our Savior's words: "Give and it shall be given unto you." It might be hard to find to-day within the Province of Saskatchewan a more prosperous district than the St. Peter's Colony. The personal experience of those connected with the Orphanage can testify that within St. Peter's Colony the spirit of charity is still vigorous and fully alive.

May the founders and first settlers bequeath this spirit to the present generation! By doing so they shall take the best means to assure continual prosperity and further success in the work they have had so greatly at heart and for which they have made so many sacrifices in by-gone days.

May God continue to bless the work which was begun twenty-five years ago!

REV. W. BRUCK, O. M. I.,
THE CATHOLIC ORPHANAGE,
Prince Albert, Sask.



Rt. Rev. Bruno Doerfler, O.S.B.
Died June 12, 1919

Der Hochwste Bruno Dörfler, O. S. B.
Gestorben in 1919.